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# Cybersecurity Risk Management for Parish Leadership

2026 Clergy-Laity Congress



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# Outline

- Introduction
- Why cybersecurity matters
- Data and assets to protect
- Common cybersecurity threats
- Where to begin?



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# Introduction

- Andy Green, Ph.D.
- Parish Council Member, Holy Transfiguration, Marietta
- Chair – Cybersecurity Committee, Metropolis of Atlanta
- Chair – Parish Cybersecurity Subcommittee, Archdiocese of America
- Associate Professor, Kennesaw State University
- Anything I say is my own opinion and does not represent KSU or the University System of Georgia



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# Why cybersecurity matters



**We have a responsibility to protect systems and data entrusted to us**



**We must balance our protection efforts with system access and usability for:**

Priests

Staff

Volunteers

Visitors



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# Why cybersecurity matters

Parishes are stewards of sensitive data



Failure to take reasonable and prudent steps to protect data potentially exposes the parish and its members varying types of harms:

Spiritual

Financial

Civil

Reputational



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# Data and assets to protect

- Membership records
  - Names
  - Addresses
  - Phone numbers
  - Email addresses
  - Financial details
  - Photographs



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# Data and assets to protect

- Financial data
  - Donation processing
  - Bank accounts
  - Payment systems



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# Data and assets to protect

- Parish operations
  - Sermon archives
  - Event plans and registration details
  - Pastoral counseling notes
  - Other sensitive parishioner information

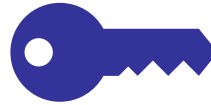


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# Common Security Threats



Phishing emails



Ransomware



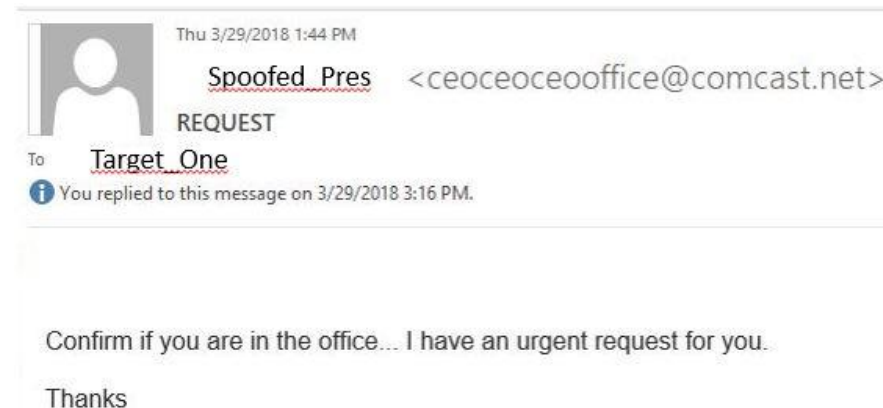
SMS messages



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# Phishing Email

- Victim receives an email asking about availability
- Victim responds
- Threat actor asks victim to make a gift card purchase and send details





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# Phishing Email




Thu 3/29/2018 3:19 PM

Spoofed\_Pres <ceoceooffice@comcast.net>

Re: REQUEST

To Target\_One

 You forwarded this message on 3/29/2018 6:38 PM.

Target\_One

I'll need you to run an errand for me at the store as I am having a meeting now. I need you to get iTunes gift cards to send out to a client urgently. The client requested for physical gift cards, will need 30 qty of \$100 worth Apple iTunes Gift Card. You should Scratch the back, get the pin and email a clear picture of all the pin to me immediately.

Thanks



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# Ransomware



Type of attack that prevents victims from using their computer systems by using encryption.



Attackers demand victims pay ransom in cryptocurrency to decrypt systems.



Payments made in 2025 totaled approximately \$820 million USD — attacks surged 50% yet only 28% of victims paid, a record low (Chainalysis)



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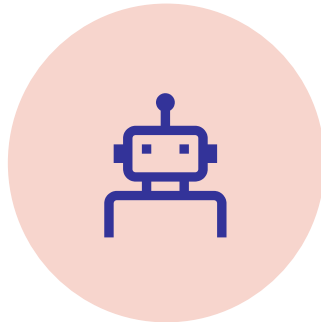
# SMS messages





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# Where to begin?



START SMALL AND BUILD



FIND YOUR LOCAL  
EXPERTISE AND ASK FOR  
HELP



PROMOTE CYBER  
HYGIENE FOR PRIESTS,  
STAFF, VOLUNTEERS



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# Where to begin?

- Policy creation
  - Policy is a written expression of Parish leadership's intent on a matter
  - It provides direction for Priests, staff, volunteers
  - If you write it, enforce it
  - If you don't write it, you can't enforce it
  - If you don't want to enforce it, don't write it



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# Where to begin?

- Identify your assets
  - Where is your data
  - Who has access to it
  - How do they access it



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